

Message Text

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ACTION OES-07

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FM AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5074
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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: EFIS, SENV, IWC-1, TN
SUBJECT: POSSIBLE WHALING ACTIVITIES IN TONGA

REF: STATE 47919

SUMMARY: EMBOFF HAS DISCUSSED TONGAN WHALING ACTIVITIES
WITH MFA OFFICIALS. THE MATTER HAS BEEN EXPLORED BY NZ
HIGH COMMISSIONER IN TONGA IN RECENT WEEKS. NZ HIGH
COMMISSIONER'S REPORT AND MFA'S PRESENT THINKING IN THE
MATTE FOLLOW. END SUMMARY.

1. PRESENT GNZ UNDERSTANDING OF SITUATION IS AS FOLLOWS:

- (A) TONGAN TERRITORIAL WATERS ARE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE
- BREEDING GROUNDS FOR SOUTH PACIFIC HUMPBACK WHALE;
- (B) WHALES ARE EASILY ACCESSIBLE DURING BREEDING CYCLE
TO TONGANS USING UNSOPHISTICATED BOATS;
- (C) TONGANS WERE TAUGHT BY AMERICAN WHALERS APPROXI-
- MATELY CENTURY AGO TO HUNT HUMPBACK;

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- (D) ANNUAL ABORIGINAL HUNT CONTINUES TODAY WITH CATCH
- TOTALLING LESS THAN TEN (WHALES ARE OFTEN PREGNANT
- HOWEVER);
- (E) THERE IS CURRENTLY NO COMMERCIAL MOTIVE OR VALUE
- IN HUNT OTHER THAN LOCAL TASTES; WHALE IS CAUGHT, CUT
- UP, MEAT DISTRIBUTED, AND WASTE DISCARDED WITHIN 24

- HOURS (TIME LIMIT SET BY TONGAN LAW). RESULT IS THAT
- MOST OF WHALE ACTUALLY ENDS UP AS WASTAGE;

- (F) NZ HIGH COMMISSION IN TONGA HAS BEGUN TO EXPLORE
- WITH TONGAN OFFICIALS POSSIBILITY OF TONGA ASSOCIATING
- WITH, OR AT LEAST ADHERING TO, INTERNATIONAL WHALING
- COMMISSION (IWC);
- (G) TONGAN GOVERNMENT HAS RESPONDED THAT IT IS
- INTERESTED IN IWC, IS NOT ADVERSE TO STOPPING THE HUNT,
- BUT WILL NEED SOME TYPE OF FINANCIAL INDUCEMENT;

- (H) NZ HIGH COMMISSION HAS NO CONFIRMATION OF ANY
- GROUPS, TONGAN OR FOREIGN, INTERESTED IN ESTABLISHING
- LARGE-SCALE COMMERCIAL WHALING.

2. MFA SOURCES STATE THAT GNZ, IN REACTION TO TONGAN APPEAL FOR FINANCIAL INDUCEMENT, IS:

- (A) CONTEMPLATING MAKING AVAILABLE TO TONGA SMALL GRANT
 - FOR RESEARCH INTO TONGAN WHALING RESOURCES;

 - (B) EXAMINING POSSIBILITY OF ATTRACTING TO TONGA OTHER
 - RESEARCH TEAMS INTERESTED IN WHALING;

 - (C) EXAMINING POSSIBILITY OF CREATING A WHALING MUSEUM
 - IN TONGA;
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- (D) LIKELY TO PROPOSE THE ISSUANCE OF A SERIES OF
- TONGAN WHALE STAMPS;

- (E) EXAMINING THE FEASIBILITY OF EXPLOITING TOURIST
- INTERESTS IN THE WHALES, PERHAPS CENTERED AROUND
- EXCURSIONS TO WATCH BREEDING WHALES "DISPORT."
- (MFA UNDERSTANDS THAT A CANADIAN TOURISM PROMOTER HAS
- RECENTLY VISITED TONGA AND DISCUSSED THE PROMOTION OF
- A TOURIST CONCEPT BASED ON WHALES AND WHALING.)
- PLEASE PROTECT POINTS (A)-(E) OF PARAGRAPH 2.

3. EMBASSY UNDERSTANDS THAT MARTIN CAWTHORN OF GNZ FISHERIES RESEARCH HAS DISCUSSED TONGAN SITUATION WITH SIDNEY HOLT OF FAO. EMBASSY WILL ENDEAVOR TO PURSUE MATTER WITH CAWTHORN AND WILL ADVISE ANY FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS.

4. KING OF TONGA IS REPORTEDLY VERY INTERESTED IN BOOKS ON WHALING. IF DEPARTMENT COULD PROVIDE EMBASSY WITH SEVERAL BOOKS, PARTICULARLY WHALING PICTORIALS AND THOSE PROMOTING WHALE CONSERVATION, THEY MAY BE USEFUL IN SENSITIZING KING TO THE WORLDWIDE IMPORTANCE OF THIS ISSUE.

5. PLEASE NOTE THAT, AS OF MARCH 1, OPERATIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES FOR ALL TONGAN AFFAIRS, EXCEPT CONSULAR, SHIFTED FROM EMBASSY SUVA TO THIS EMBASSY. FUTURE ACTION TELEGRAMS ON THIS AND SIMILAR MATTERS SHOULD BE DIRECTED TO WELLINGTON WITH INFORMATION COPIES TO SUVA. SELDEN

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